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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the National Reading Research Center (NRRC), a federally funded center that intends to carry out research to discover what promotes readers' engagement in literacy activities, foster their critical thinking and strategic learning, and prepare them to meet the challenges of a technological age. The paper describes the mission of the NRRC, perceived needs in reading research, the people in the NRRC, research programs in the NRRC (embracing instruction, learning, assessment, and professional development), planned collaborations and activities, and forthcoming products and publications. The paper concludes that the NRRC research agenda incorporates the goals and problems identified in the America 2000 plan. Twenty-four references, a list of the members of the NRRC national advisory board, and a list of the 41 research projects at NRRC are attached. (RS)

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Themes and Directions of the National Reading Research Center

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NRRC

National Reading Research Center

PERSPECTIVES IN READING RESEARCH, NO.1
January 1993

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NRRC

National Reading Research Center

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The work reported herein is a National Reading Research Project of the University of Georgia and University of Maryland. It was supported under the Educational Research and Development Centers Program (PR/AWARD NO. 117A20007) as administered by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education. The findings and opinions expressed here do not necessarily reflect the position or policies of the National Reading Research Center, the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, or the U.S. Department of Education.

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About the National Reading Research Center

The National Reading Research Center (NRRC) is funded by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement of the U.S. Department of Education to conduct research on reading and reading instruction. The NRRC is operated by a consortium of the University of Georgia and the University of Maryland College Park in collaboration with researchers at several institutions nationwide.

The NRRC's mission is to discover and document those conditions in homes, schools, and communities that encourage children to become skilled, enthusiastic, lifelong readers. NRRC researchers are committed to advancing the development of instructional programs sensitive to the cognitive, sociocultural, and motivational factors that affect children's success in reading. NRRC researchers from a variety of disciplines conduct studies with teachers and students from widely diverse cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds in prekindergarten through grade 12 classrooms. Research projects deal with the influence of family and family-school interactions on the development of literacy; the interaction of sociocultural factors and motivation to read; the impact of literature-based reading programs on reading achievement; the effects of reading strategies instruction on comprehension and critical thinking in literature, science, and history; the influence of innovative group participation structures on motivation and learning; the potential of computer technology to enhance literacy; and the development of methods and standards for alternative literacy assessments.

The NRRC is further committed to the participation of teachers as full partners in its research. A better understanding of how teachers view the development of literacy, how they use knowledge from research, and how they approach change in the classroom is crucial to improving instruction. To further this understanding, the NRRC conducts school-based research in which teachers explore their own philosophical and pedagogical orientations and trace their professional growth.

Dissemination is an important feature of NRRC activities. Information on NRRC research appears in several formats. *Research Reports* communicate the results of original research or synthesize the findings of several lines of inquiry. They are written primarily for researchers studying various areas of reading and reading instruction. The *Perspective Series* presents a wide range of publications, from calls for research and commentary on research and practice to first-person accounts of experiences in schools. *Instructional Resources* include curriculum materials, instructional guides, and materials for professional growth, designed primarily for teachers.

For more information about the NRRC's research projects and other activities, or to have your name added to the mailing list, please contact:

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Preface

This perspective describes the National Reading Research Center (NRRC) — its mission, people, research programs, collaborations, forthcoming products, publications, and activities. Although we write as co-directors of the NRRC, we wish to acknowledge the thinking of our university- and school-based colleagues, who in their roles as investigators contributed substantively to the design of the NRRC. In the end, of course, we take full responsibility for any omissions or imperfections in our writing.

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National Reading Research Center
Universities of Georgia and Maryland
Perspectives in Reading Research, No. 1
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Themes and Directions of the National Reading Research Center

Donna E. Alvermann
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The National Reading Research Center (NRRC) is a five-year $7.7-million cooperative agreement between the Office of Educational Research and Improvement in the U.S. Department of Education and a consortium of the University of Georgia and the University of Maryland College Park. The NRRC is the singular federally funded research center charged with expanding the knowledge base on children's and adolescents' acquisition of reading proficiency and the use of that proficiency to learn from text. The co-directors of the NRRC are Donna E. Alvermann of the University of Georgia and John T. Guthrie of the University of Maryland College Park. James F. Baumann (Georgia) and Patricia S. Koskinen (Maryland) are the associate directors. Six of the NRRC's 41 projects are at sites other than the University of Georgia and the University of Maryland. These Affiliated Scholar Projects are located at the University of Washington, Seattle, WA; San Diego State University, San Diego, CA; the University of Texas, Austin, TX; Clark Atlanta University, Atlanta, GA; the University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA; and Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ. Together these sites provide a diverse set of schools, communities, and homes in which to carry out the NRRC's research agenda.

THE NRRC'S MISSION

One of the national goals proposed for American education by former President George Bush is that by the year 2000, every adult American will be literate, possess the skills to compete in a global economy, and be prepared to exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. To assist the achievement of this goal of nationwide literacy, the NRRC must acknowledge and address four pervasive problems.

First and foremost is the well-documented problem that *too many Americans lack the ability and desire to read and write*. Scholars whose work appeals to a broad spectrum of political views generally agree that as a nation we are less literate than we could or should be (Langer, Applebee, Mullis, & Foertsch, 1990; Ravitch, 1985). Too many Americans lack essential reading skills (Kirsch & Jungeblut, 1986; National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), and an astonishing proportion of students lacks the broad range of literacy skills needed for their own learning and productive participation in society (The Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills [SCANS], 1991). Too many students who can read choose to avoid the printed word, even at their peril (Foertsch, 1992). We will address this problem by carrying out research to discover what promotes readers' engagement in literacy activities, fosters their critical thinking and strategic learning, and prepares them to meet the challenges of a technological age.

A second problem is *the crisis in equity*. It is time to acknowledge and confront the persistent disparity in the reading achievement of mainstream and non-mainstream students in the United States. Clearly, we are failing to meet the literacy needs of today's socially and culturally diverse student population. To assist in altering this situation, we will conduct research that

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explores sociocultural issues in literacy achievement and how best to address them in classrooms, homes, and communities across the country.

A third problem is *the nature of current reading instruction*. Although the last two decades have seen significant advances in our understanding of the reading process and how to teach reading, this understanding has not had widespread impact on classroom practice (Alvermann & Moore, 1991; Wendler, Samuels, & Moore, 1989). With few exceptions, reading instruction today looks remarkably similar to that of the 1950s, with a basal reader program, three ability-level groups, a student workbook, and an end-of-the-year standardized test. Why is this the case? We believe that efforts to disseminate research on reading instruction have been hampered by findings that do not address teachers' questions about the complexities of teaching students to read in actual classrooms. Consequently, we will involve teachers as full participants in research, and we will establish permanent research sites in the schools.

The fourth problem is the *prevalence of decontextualized reading research*. We know a great deal about how typical readers process information in carefully controlled situations, but relatively little about how they construct meaning in the contexts in which they are usually required to read. Consequently, we will focus the greater portion of our efforts on research that makes a difference in school-based settings. Recognizing the need for a reality check on what teachers view as worthy of research, we conducted a national poll of teachers in which we asked respondents to identify and rank problems warranting research. The results of the poll (O'Flahavan, Gambrell, Guthrie, Stahl, Baumann, & Alvermann, 1992) indicate that teachers' first priority is finding ways to motivate students and create an interest in reading. This priority, as stated by teachers, led directly to what we have come to call an engagement perspective for our research.

Engagement Perspective

According to a recent publication by the National Academy of Education (1991), "the interests of students, institutions, and society as a whole may be better served by discovering more productive forms of engagement with learning" (p. 39). Research has documented that a reader's engagement with texts is a strong predictor of her or his success in reading (Morrow & Weinstein, 1986), while additional evidence shows that children play a role in their own educational development by the choices they make about how to spend their time (Scarr & McCartney, 1983).

At the National Reading Research Center, our overarching goal is to study how to cultivate highly engaged, self-determining readers who are the architects of their own learning. Our research is unified by an engagement perspective, which is based on the assumption that students acquire the competencies and motivations to read for diverse purposes, such as gaining knowledge, performing a task, interpreting an author's perspective, sharing reactions to stories and informational texts, escaping into the literary world, or taking social and political action in response to what is read. Highly engaged readers are motivated, knowledgeable, and socially interactive.

An engagement perspective, which is congruent with highly respected views on reading acquisition and instruction, recognizes the social nature of cognition and is useful for addressing the problems that currently stand as roadblocks to achieving nationwide literacy. It is also a useful heuristic for ensuring that the NRRC's research agenda is coherent and responsive to the multiple and intersecting needs of students, parents, policymakers, and teachers.

Research Objectives

Guided by an engagement perspective and solidly grounded in the best thinking of teachers and researchers in reading, investigators at the National Reading Research Center will pursue the following objectives:

- Describe the growth of students' motivation to read at home and in school.
- Extend the knowledge base on the cognitive processes of reading by relating these processes to social and motivational dimensions of instruction.
- Chronicle the effects of long-term strategy instruction on the motivational and cognitive

development of students of diverse cultures and abilities.

- Describe and develop social, cognitive, and language bridges from home to school for emergent readers.

- Explore how schools appropriate technology to enhance literacy and increase the amount and diversity of students' independent reading.

- Study the influences that innovative social participation patterns have on literary interpretation, higher order thinking during content area reading, and sustained motivation for sharing books.

- Examine and design new literature-based curricula and instruction for first- and second-grade learners, emphasizing programs for students who are placed at-risk for reading failure.

- Trace knowledge acquisition during reading in science, math, geography, and history classes in collaboration with teachers in these content areas.

- Evaluate alternative reading assessments, establish standards for teacher-based assessments, and develop policy-based alternative assessments.

- Affirm our commitment to collaborative research, which enables us to define and describe professional development in teacher-researcher communities, preservice education, and local school system initiatives.

Our vision for the NRRC is based on the belief that there should be a dynamic, reciprocal relationship between theory and practice -- that theory can inform practice and practice can enlighten theory. When teachers engage in research, posing problems, and examining their own work, there is inherently a bridge between theory and practice. Teacher inquiry develops ownership of the research questions, enhances the credibility of the findings, and fosters dissemination. Therefore, NRRC activities will enlist teachers as collaborative researchers and establish permanent research sites where university- and school-based investigators plan, conduct, synthesize, and report research.

PERCEIVED NEEDS IN READING RESEARCH

Prior to publishing the Request for Proposals for the National Reading Research Center in 1991, officials in the Office of Educational Research and Improvement in the U.S. Department of Education commissioned six nationally known literacy experts to write conceptual papers on the direction of future research in reading. These experts represented the research interests of both university- and school-based educators. Their six chapters form part of a forthcoming book titled *Reading Research into the Year 2000* (Lawrence Erlbaum, publisher). The present research perspective, which is derived from the final chapter in the forthcoming book, was originally a response to the six commissioned authors' articulation of perceived needs in reading research.

Social Contexts of Literacy Instruction

Although instructional research has documented that many cognitive strategies, such as predicting, drawing inferences, and summarizing, can be taught explicitly, it has shed little light on how these strategies can be incorporated systematically into classroom routines. Children who possess the appropriate cognitive strategies for comprehending what they read may not use those strategies in actual classroom situations. Why? Lack of motivation? Little or no interest in reading? Inability to transfer strategic knowledge?

In their search for answers to this multifaceted question, researchers have begun to look beyond unidimensional models of readers' internal processes, which ignore real world constraints. They have found that reading, like all other cognitive acts, occurs within a social and cultural context.

Brown, Collins, and Duguid (cited in Beck, in press) point out that "classroom practices have been criticized specifically for decontextualizing knowledge and skills, stripping them of the cultural and physical supports of the disciplinary practices in which they are actually used." Anderson (in press) calls for "studies [that] examine the social contexts of early literacy," while Sulzby (in press) notes the need to study individual differences across age groups in diverse

social, linguistic, and cultural settings. Clearly, researchers have begun to see cognitive acts in reading and reading instruction as socially situated. However, questions about the extent to which different social contexts mediate reading and writing instruction remain unanswered.

Developmental Nature of Reading and Writing

In order to understand fully how children learn to read and write, researchers generally agree on the need to study that process from preschool onward through the secondary school years. However, while they see the preK-12 span as an appropriate time for exploring children's emergent literacy abilities, their interaction with adults in intergenerational and home literacy activities, and their transition from emergent to conventional readers and writers, they disagree as to where the emphasis should be placed in studying the development of literate behavior.

For example, Beck (in press) and Anderson (in press) favor studies that investigate how whole language approaches and phonemic awareness affect children's acquisition of reading. Sulzby (in press) would emphasize studies that explore "when literacy begins and what counts as literacy." Mosenthal (in press) and Scroggins (in press) stress research that takes into account the need for equality of learning opportunities for all students regardless of race, ethnic, or socioeconomic background. And Monahan (in press), who believes that there is presently too little attention to middle and secondary school literacy development, advocates research on how to motivate students to become strategic readers capable of integrating reading, writing, speaking, and listening across the content areas.

Regardless of their differences, researchers generally agree that in this decade investigating how students learn to read and write is certain to offer new challenges to researchers. Culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms, social unrest, changes in family structure, and tensions within the research community itself are but a few of the factors that will influence how studies are planned, conducted, analyzed, and reported.

Disparities in Reading Achievement

In seeking to explain disparities in reading achievement, researchers in the past may have been too quick to point to problems with language, experience, and differences in school and family values. Scroggins suggests a close examination of the assumptions underlying explanations for low reading achievement so that if previous assumptions no longer hold, they can be discarded. A revised understanding of the reasons for low reading achievement could conceivably lead to more equitable achievement for all.

Scroggins is not alone in recommending that researchers turn their attention towards those students who are struggling to become literate. Other authors also address the need to study long-term and theoretically based instructional interventions such as Reading Recovery (Deford, Lyons, & Pinnell, 1991) and Reciprocal Teaching (Palincsar & Brown, 1984). Scroggins, however, focuses on the needs of inner-city children, stressing the importance of developing and assessing the effectiveness of literacy materials that fit urban lifestyles, that challenge and enrich every child's learning, and that represent the literature of African Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans, and Asians. She also calls for research on parental involvement in the education of urban children.

Research/Practice Relationship

In the past, reading researchers have tended to design their studies around theoretical concerns rather than actual classroom situations, according to Mosenthal (in press). They have assumed that teachers can be convinced "that their problems and goals are similar (if not identical) to the problems and goals ... investigated by reading researchers." As a result of this center-to-periphery approach to agenda setting, Mosenthal argues, "researchers have ignored the real problems and goals which they purportedly are entrusted to solve and facilitate." This approach to research also has social and political connotations. As Mosenthal notes, previous reading research has been conducted mostly by middle-class European American researchers and has focused largely on white readers, so the goals and problems of readers in minority groups have been all but neglected.

It is generally agreed, however, that reading research has had some effect on classroom practice. Anderson (in press) notes the influence of concepts like story grammar, schema, phonemic awareness, and automaticity on reading education. Beck (in press) points out that teachers no longer view reading as a process for getting meaning from the printed page. They now see it as an interactive process in which readers construct meaning, using both information in the text and their own experiences.

Although Monahan (in press) and Scroggins (in press) acknowledge the abundance of research recommendations for improving the teaching of reading, as teachers, they are deeply concerned about the need for greater implementation of what is already known. Monahan suggests that one way to solve the implementation problem is for teachers themselves to become researchers who investigate their own classroom practices and act on what they find. This suggestion coincides with Mosenthal's call for the involvement of teachers in setting reading research agendas.

Technology

Broadened definitions of literacy, or multiple literacies as some have described them, remind us that we live in a rapidly changing world where limited access to traditional texts does not necessarily equal limited access to the information presented in those texts. As Sulzby (in press) points out, even children from the most print-impoverished homes are likely to have access to computer games, videotapes, and home videocassette players. Yet, she notes, "[researchers] have tended to ignore software development or treat it as atheoretical ... [despite its] great power to define the literacies that chil'·en experience." Technology's ability to captivate the imaginations of readers and writers has not been fully explored, particularly in terms of its potential for changing students' responses to literature. Nor is there sufficient research on how textual information might be presented and learned differently in electronic and printed forms.

It is teachers who determine how effectively computers are used to enhance a classroom's literacy curriculum. Teachers with little interest in computers may ignore computer-based instruction, unless, as Monahan (in press) suggests, they are encouraged to participate in professional development seminars that actively involve them in the medium. Research on the uses of technology in the classroom, according to Monahan, should focus on developing or refining strategies that highlight the teacher-as-thinker model of instruction.

Learning Subject Matter from Texts and Other Materials

The ability to learn from subject matter texts and other print materials is a mark of one's independence as a literate person. It is also an indication that one is able to think critically and draw reasonable conclusions about the information presented in texts or other media. Never in our history has the need for critical readers been greater; yet, as Anderson (in press) points out, "evidence continues to appear that students do not reason well about w·itten material." In attempting to identify the forces that may conspire against students' attainment of higher order literacy, Anderson considers several possibilities, the most basic of which is that "there simply are not well-worked out and widely recognized instructional strategies for promoting critical thinking within the field of reading." Like Beck (in press), he places a high priority on research that could be used in improving students' ability to read and think critically about extended and multiple text presentations.

We suspect that a dearth of appropriate and widely recognized instructional strategies for fostering critical thinking is not the only force conspiring against students' success in learning from subject matter texts. Motivation to read complex expository prose about topics with little or no relevance for their everyday lives must surely be low for most students. Beck (in press) recognizes the problem of low motivation when she recommends that researchers "continue both cognitive and motivational work on developing techniques to encourage students' active engagement with text." Monahan shows a similar recognition in her recommendation that researchers concentrate on helping middle and secondary school readers develop strategies for coping with conceptually dense texts.

In summary, the perceived needs in reading research, as they were defined by six nationally known experts, are reflected in the NRRC's research agenda.

Moreover, these perceived needs echo the theoretical grounding for the NRRC's research objectives.

PEOPLE IN THE NRRC

The NRRC is fortunate to have both diversity in scholarship and diversity in human resources. Our strong commitment to teacher involvement and cultural diversity is demonstrated in our investigators, both university- and school-based, our National Advisory Board, and the many individuals and groups participating in our research.

Principal Investigators

At this time, the NRRC has a total of 71 investigators working on 41 different projects. The investigators comprise a representative cross-section of the research interests and methodologies necessary for moving literacy research forward into the year 2000.

The university-based researchers represent an array of disciplines and hail from colleges of education, child and family development, and arts and sciences. Most have their doctorates in areas such as reading education, psychology, educational psychology, elementary education, English/language arts education, and curriculum and instruction. Most have been involved in long-term externally funded research projects. Some have been Fulbright Scholars, while others have been invited scholars at major research institutions in the U. S. and abroad.

Our university-based researchers also have a strong record of involvement with public schools and educational agencies. They have had many successful collaborations with classroom teachers, an important characteristic given the NRRC's emphasis on school-based research (see later section on teacher involvement).

Teacher Involvement

As previously noted, when findings from research on literacy instruction stem from the concerns of researchers rather than teachers, there is little chance that the research will make lasting differences in classroom practice. The same holds true for research conducted outside of classrooms in laboratory-like settings or in artificially contrived settings within schools. Consequently, the NRRC seeks to avoid what Mosenthal (in press) calls the "center-to-periphery" approach to agenda setting, whereby researchers identify the problems they want to research without involving teachers in the research process. We are committed to including teachers as full participants in the design, implementation, interpretation, evaluation, and dissemination of the NRRC's research. More than 30 percent of the NRRC's investigators are classroom teachers, district-level curriculum coordinators, administrators, or members of state boards of education. Approximately 85 percent of our projects involve teachers and students working in their schools, while the remaining 15 percent involve home, library, community center, and book club settings. In addition, most of the NRRC's graduate research assistants have been classroom teachers, and four of the National Advisory Board members represent teachers' interests.

The National Advisory Board

The eleven members of the NRRC's National Advisory Board complement the research interests and methodologies represented in the NRRC. The Board meets annually with investigators to review our accomplishments and contribute to the evolving vision of the NRRC. Its members include experts in the areas of literary theory, measurement, textual analysis, sociolinguistics, multicultural education, large- and small-scale assessment, cultural anthropology, and school administration. (See Appendix A for list of National Advisory Board members and their affiliations.)

Cultural Diversity

We believe that the inclusion of researchers from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds is vital to the ultimate success of the NRRC's mission, especially if the NRRC is to address inequities in reading achievement. Currently, 15 percent of the first two years' projects include investigators who are members of minority groups. We plan to expand this number in the last three years of the grant, and other minority scholars may join projects in Year 2.

Among the host of individuals who have agreed to collaborate in the NRRC's research are many Hispanic, Asian, and African Americans. They include classroom teachers and their students, school

administrators, state and local level policymakers, and graduate and undergraduate research assistants. The NRRC is committed to recruiting graduate research assistants from colleges and universities that historically have had high percentages of minority students. In addition, we have established links with the University of Georgia's National Center for the Gifted and Talented whose mission is to identify gifted students in underserved populations and create curricula that address these students' lives.

RESEARCH PROGRAMS IN THE NRRC

The NRRC's research embraces four major program areas: (a) instruction, (b) learning, (c) assessment, and (d) professional development. (See Appendix B for a complete listing of these projects and project investigators.) The first three program areas were identified by the U. S. Department of Education's Office of Educational Research and Improvement in consultation with the various constituencies and individuals interested in improving literacy. This consultation process included holding roundtables at major education research conferences, commissioning the book *Reading Research into the Year 2000*, and soliciting comments from the public at large through advertisements placed in highly visible publications that appeal to researcher and teacher audiences.

The NRRC added the fourth program area on professional development because we believe that successful instruction, learning, and assessment in reading must engage teachers as well as learners. Although many of our instruction, learning, and assessment projects include aspects of professional development, they do not study directly how teachers become engaged in their own professional growth or how their engagement influences their beliefs, knowledge, and actions. Research that is not informed by practice stands little chance of changing practice, especially when teachers' beliefs are at odds with the theories underlying the proposed changes (Richardson, Anders, Tidwell, & Lloyd, 1991). Moreover, traditional professional development activities will not change instruction if they overlook teachers' philosophical and pedagogical orientations to reading and fail to include teachers as active participants in the change process (Gitlin, 1990).

Instruction

The 15 research projects in this program area comprise four interrelated strands of inquiry: (a) literature and early reading, (b) comprehension and cognitive strategies, (c) knowledge-rich contexts, and (d) social contexts of literacy instruction.

In the first strand, *literature and early reading*, researchers are studying the sociocultural, cognitive, and motivational aspects of reading instruction for the emergent and primary grade reader. These studies focus on literature-based reading programs, whole language approaches, and the principles of Reading Recovery lessons primarily as they apply in low-income and inner-city classrooms. One study follows a cohort of students from first through third grades to determine how changes in literacy programs and literacy instruction affect students' growth in literacy. It includes teachers in small and large school districts located in rural and urban areas that serve students of both high and low socioeconomic status.

The second strand, *comprehension and cognitive strategies*, emphasizes year-long strategy instruction in which teachers attempt to replicate in their regular classrooms the comprehension strategies that researchers have found effective under experimental conditions. These studies incorporate a mix of instructional alternatives, including transactional strategy instruction, comprehension monitoring, literature discussion groups, sensory impression training, repeated readings, directed reading activities, and dialogical thinking-reading lessons. They examine how strategies empower students to select challenging reading and learning tasks. One study involves parents and grandparents in discussion groups designed to develop elementary students' critical reading abilities.

Researchers in the third strand, *knowledge-rich contexts*, are focusing on content area reading instruction in science, history, and geography at the middle and secondary school levels. They will describe how various models of concept-centered reading instruction support students' cognitive, social, and motivational development. In one study, a science teacher, reading specialist, and university-based researcher have designed a year-long "hands-on" science curriculum in which Chapter I students are

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taught how to generate questions about an observed phenomenon and then search for the answers using a variety of print sources (textbooks, trade books, reference books, and illustrations). The study examines how students learn to select books and materials to fit their interests and satisfy their curiosities. One aim of the investigation is to map changes in children's intrinsic motivations for reading over the year. Year 2 of the study will evaluate the model after it has been implemented in eight classrooms across three schools.

The goal of the fourth strand, *social contexts of literacy instruction*, is to introduce innovative social participation structures that can lead to higher order thinking and sustained motivation for reading. These participation structures include student-led (as distinct from teacher-led) discussions of expository texts, cross-age peer tutoring, and computer-based reading and writing activities aimed at increasing the amount and diversity of students' independent reading. The studies embrace a cross-section of K-12 rural, urban, and suburban classrooms that range from low to high in the socioeconomic and cultural diversity of their student populations. In one study, university student athletes who have difficulty reading will tutor elementary students who have been placed at-risk for reading failure. The study seeks to determine whether a tutoring program that includes instruction in phonemic awareness, story writing, and the reading of children's literature can improve the reading skills and attitudes of both the tutors and the children they work with.

Learning

The research projects in this program area can be divided into three strands: (a) emergent literacy and language development, (b) motivation for reading, and (c) learning subject matter from text. Each of these strands is supported by the engagement perspective and the fundamental assumption that learning to read and write, as well as learning *from* reading and writing, depends critically on having ready access to print-rich environments.

That access can be provided by the home, school, or community. However, not all students have equal access to print-rich environments, as the studies in the *emergent literacy and language development* strand will demonstrate. A four-year longitudinal study will follow students from low-income African American families, low-income white families, and middle-income white families as they move from pre-kindergarten through second grade. The goal of the study is to specify more completely the variety of contexts and processes that contribute to the development of literacy. In another longitudinal study with low-income families, two school-based researchers will describe how three-way dialogue journals involving themselves, their students, and their students' parents affected the students' literacy development and the family-school relationship.

One clear message from the Maryland-Georgia national poll of teachers is that research is needed on how children develop *motivation for reading*. Working from the perspective that engaged readers use sophisticated reading strategies according to their motivations for doing so, researchers in this strand seek to discover what those motivations are and how to channel them for improved learning. For example, a five-year longitudinal study involving 7th- and 8th-grade students as coresearchers will follow the student participants through high school for the purpose of examining conditions that support or impede students' continuing impulse to learn. Another study will investigate why librarians traditionally have been left out of the dialogue on literacy and learning, a curious fact given that access to libraries is known to have a positive effect on children who come from print-impoverished environments (Guthrie & Greaney, 1991).

The third strand, *learning subject matter from text*, explores the importance of providing students with ready access to print-rich environments, particularly within middle and secondary school content area classrooms. Some types of texts — the story problem, for instance — have characteristics that require students to use specialized strategies if they are to learn from them. Other texts that require strategic reading include multiple documents on the same topic (used, for example, in history classes), computer-presented texts, and texts varying widely in quality and accuracy. Researchers will examine these types of texts and the effects they have on students' learning. In one study, the researcher is examining multicultural literature using a typology of ethnic identity to see what effects positive and negative depictions of various ethnic

groups have on students' engagement in learning from this literature.

Assessment

The distinguishing characteristic of the NRRC's research on assessment is its emphasis on studying assessment from the perspective of the test user as well as the test developer. The studies in this program area focus on two questions: (a) how do alternative performance-based reading assessments compare to traditional standardized reading tests? and (b) how do alternative performance-based assessments influence the instruction and learning of children who are having difficulty learning to read?

In addressing standards for alternative assessments, one team of researchers will investigate their design, validity, reliability, usefulness, and the ease with which the results can be reported and interpreted. Another team will observe and interview teachers, students, parents, and administrators both in inner-city and suburban schools to determine how reading assessment information relates to their views of students, schools, and literacy instruction, and their own beliefs about achievement in reading. A third team is examining portfolio assessments to determine which aspects of reading, writing, thinking, and social interaction portfolios are likely and unlikely to measure.

The alternative assessments central to the National Assessment of Educational Progress and the New Standards Project are also being studied in generic form. In qualitative studies of schools and surveys of state-wide practices, the goals, contents, formats, and administrative contexts of these large-scale assessments are being examined in terms of their relation to instruction. Other researchers are conducting a national survey of research-based performance assessment tools for the purpose of compiling an annotated reference source on alternative reading assessments.

Professional Development

The research projects in professional development reflect the view that traditional staff development workshops often fail to produce significant and lasting changes in classroom practices because they ignore teachers' philosophical and pedagogical orientations and/or they fail to involve teachers in the change process. The studies in this strand also reflect an engagement perspective on professional development in the assumption that instruction, learning, and assessment in literacy-related activities must engage teachers as well as learners.

Of the five studies concerned with professional development, three are longitudinal, with one scheduled to last five years. The five-year study, presently underway, is in partnership with the League of Professional Schools (discussed later). Currently, this study has two of its four components in place: the elementary whole language component (in two county schools) and the community literacy program. Still to be initiated are a middle or secondary school component and a preschool education program. In working out the rationale for the elementary component, teachers in both schools established increasing students' motivation to read as their highest priority. Another longitudinal study will explore how teachers' beliefs and knowledge about teaching literacy change over time and how this change may influence their instructional decisions, assessments, and actions.

A third professional development project will show how information learned in district-level professional development courses is incorporated into teachers' instructional repertoires. The remaining two studies have a multicultural emphasis. One is designed to establish the cultural knowledge base necessary for guiding preservice teachers as they modify an existing curriculum to achieve a better fit with the reading attitudes and interests of inner-city African American children. The other explores how teachers develop understandings of literacy instruction for multicultural populations by participating in book clubs where they read and discuss contemporary fiction written by authors from the same cultural backgrounds as their students.

PLANNED COLLABORATIONS AND ACTIVITIES

For research to be implemented it must first be perceived as relevant to the people who will use it and benefit from it. We believe the best way to ensure such relevancy is to maintain a two-way communication between the NRRC and teachers, school administrators, reading and curriculum specialists, professional organizations, policymakers,

parents, and children. To establish this two-way communication, we have several collaborative projects and related activities already underway; others will be initiated during the second year of the grant. These current activities can be grouped into three categories: (a) school networks, (b) professional organizations and conferences, and (c) written and electronic communications. Following is a sampling of the activities from each of these categories.

School Networks

To facilitate the substantial amount of research that will be conducted with school-based researchers, the NRRC plans to collaborate with interested schools in establishing school research centers. The school research centers will provide places for university- and school-based research teams to plan, implement, analyze, interpret, and report their research. They will provide a daily source of information from the field. Site selection criteria will be sensitive to the need for school research centers that reflect diversity in both teacher and student populations.

Researchers at the University of Maryland have a history of long and fruitful working relationships with the schools in their state and in the Greater Washington, DC area. Currently, Maryland researchers are working with teachers in their area to develop teacher-researcher communities. Participating teachers convene with university researchers to study their own teaching and to reflect on the processes of literacy learning. Beliefs and actions about reading and instruction are reevaluated by all members of the community, leading to a heightened sense of teacher professionalism.

The NRRC is also in the process of forming an active partnership with The League of Professional Schools. League schools are committed to shared governance and to implementing educational practices that enhance teaching and learning opportunities for faculty and students across a wide spectrum of school structures. Currently comprised of 50 schools with 2,000 K-12 teachers, the League has been recognized for the past two years as one of the top 10 educational collaborations in the United States by the National Business/Higher Education Alliance. The League's director, Carl Glickman, is on faculty at the University of Georgia and is interested in establishing collaborative research projects with the NRRC.

A team of researchers from the NRRC has been invited to enter a dialogue on how it might become involved in The Carter Center Atlanta Project, which is former President Jimmy Carter's plan for improving conditions in the inner city. Currently, the project targets 12 high schools where literacy is low and dropout rates, violence, and alienation are high.

Several university-based researchers in the NRRC have close working ties with the Writing Projects Network and Teaching-as-a-Researching Profession. Both networks support long-established teacher research projects and the dissemination of findings from those projects. These networks will also provide speakers from across the U.S. for the NRRC's first conference in February 1993.

Professional Organizations and Conferences

One way of reaching out *to* and being reached *by* school-based personnel is through special sessions at professional meetings and conferences. Consequently, the NRRC plans to solicit input from the field through innovative forums resembling the town meeting. The town meeting format will allow us to share information about the NRRC's mission and research-in-progress while simultaneously gathering information about teachers' concerns and questions. Teams of school- and university-based researchers from the NRRC will moderate these town meetings and share what they have learned with their colleagues back home.

Many educators belong to professional organizations that do not usually disseminate literacy research through their conferences or publications. To reach this audience, we have contacted the directors of large umbrella groups like the National Education Association to seek their collaboration in disseminating resource materials on literacy development.

The NRRC is planning a national conference for February 12-13, 1993, at the University of Georgia. The conference theme is developing engaged readers through family-, school-, and community-based research. Teachers, researchers, and key policymakers from the state and national levels will be involved. The meeting will have a highly interactive format and will give participants the opportunity to respond to

ideas presented at the conference and introduce their own questions and concerns. Currently there are plans to include a teleconference segment in which people at distant sites can interact "live" with the presenters and participants in Georgia. Through conferences such as this one, we expect to establish collaborations that will become part of Years 3, 4, and 5 of the grant.

Written and Electronic Communications

Prior to developing and submitting a proposal to OERI for the National Reading Research Center, we polled a stratified sample of 1,000 literacy educators, comprised mostly of classroom teachers and reading specialists, to seek their opinions on what issues and problems warranted further research. The results were used to inform our research agenda. We plan to continue this poll in order to maintain a sense of how the NRRC is meeting the needs of its constituents.

During the second year of the grant, we plan to publish an NRRC newsletter that will be available by subscription to a wide audience of educators, policymakers, and other interested parties. The newsletter will feature questions and issues taken from the NRRC's electronic networks (discussed later), regular columns by teams of NRRC university- and school-based researchers across the country, and research-based suggestions geared to teachers in elementary, middle, and secondary schools.

Two electronic bulletin boards will provide the communication links necessary for collaborations to occur between the NRRC and the field. One is an in-house system linking the NRRC's school- and university-based researchers at all of its sites across the country; this electronic forum is currently in operation for the majority of NRRC researchers. The NRRC plans to initiate a second electronic bulletin board that will permit anyone in the U. S. equipped with a microcomputer and access to one of several on-line networks (e.g., BITNET, INTERNET, ON-LINE AMERICA) to interact with NRRC personnel. An NRRC staff member will be responsible for providing an updated listing and description of the NRRC's resources. Questions directed to the NRRC will be acknowledged in several ways, including personal responses and information on how to obtain access to research findings.

FORTHCOMING PRODUCTS AND PUBLICATIONS

The NRRC's dissemination plan is geared to meet a variety of audiences for whom reading research is of vital interest. In addition to the usual technical research reports and articles, we plan to produce teacher-oriented resources and demonstration videos. These products will be advertised through the publications of various professional associations. We will also communicate directly through annual book-length syntheses of scholarly work on literacy teaching and learning, and through regularly published research highlights and policy briefs.

Research Reports

Investigators will submit reports of their research, written in a scholarly fashion but as free from jargon as possible to make them accessible to a variety of audiences. These reports will be sent to the NRRC Publications Advisory Board, which is charged with ensuring high standards of research and writing. After review and acceptance by the Board, the reports will be made available to the public through the NRRC for a small fee to cover the costs of production and mailing.

Teacher-Oriented Resources

We are especially committed to putting relevant research findings into the hands of as many teachers as possible, in formats they will find immediately useful. We plan to produce an array of resources to support teachers in teaching reading. For example, researchers at the NRRC will generate prototypes of performance assessment tasks in reading. Then, based on teacher piloting, the prototypes will be revised and published. Workshops on the use of these prototypes will be conducted at regional and national conferences.

Demonstration Videos

Several of the NRRC's researchers will produce demonstration videotapes as part of their classroom-based research projects. These tapes will depict teaching and learning situations that focus on the motivational, cognitive, and social aspects of literacy

development. Videos illustrating instructional practices, social interactions, and print-rich environments that support the engaged reader will become tools for further research, for practical use in classrooms, and for professional development activities. These videotapes will vary in quality depending on their projected use as stand-alones (professionally produced tapes) or work-in-progress kinds of tapes.

Books

The NRRC will publish books that synthesizes research on an important issue or theme. The first volume will focus on the engagement perspective of literacy teaching and learning. It will include the thinking of university- and school-based researchers at the NRRC as well as the ideas of nationally recognized experts in government, children's literature, and sociocultural matters.

Research Highlights

Information about the NRRC's network of professional collaborations, research findings, products, instructional materials, conferences, books, journal articles, videos, and policy briefs will be available through published research highlights. The NRRC will have a regular column in *The Reading Teacher* devoted to these highlights. We also plan to contribute similar items to the publications of other professional organizations as well as to publications read by parents (e.g., *Parents Magazine*), librarians, school board members, and policymakers at the state and national level. In addition, the research highlights will be available through one or more of the NRRC's electronic networks.

Policy Briefs

The NRRC staff will produce policy-related research briefs and respond to the questions of legislators and other decision makers. Because those involved with public policy often prefer face-to-face dialogues, the NRRC will sponsor meetings at the University of Maryland College Park campus and in the Washington D.C. area.

THE NRRC: REFLECTING AND TRANSCENDING PROJECTIONS

We believe the NRRC research agenda incorporates exceedingly well the goals and problems identified in former President Bush's America 2000 plan. The NRRC's agenda also addresses the perceived needs in reading research as outlined in the forthcoming book, *Reading Research into the Year 2000* (Sweet & Anderson, in press).

The NRRC agenda builds on the work of many researchers. In some instances it goes beyond the recommendations of the six literacy experts who wrote in *Reading Research into the Year 2000*. Because of the important contributions researchers in previous decades have made in illuminating the reading process, the NRRC is able to devote most of its research efforts to investigating the intricacies of how children in prekindergarten through high school socially construct knowledge from printed materials in a variety of home, school, and community contexts.

Finally, the NRRC's agenda reflects the many hours of collaboration, and especially the insights, contributed by our colleagues and coresearchers in schools and state departments of education throughout the United States. Without their constant influence and sometimes not so gentle reminders, we would have been less sensitive to the need for research that addresses literacy development as it is truly experienced — in the homes, classrooms, and communities students inhabit. To this group of educators and to all those who contributed to the national poll that informed our engagement perspective on reading, we pledge to work toward fulfilling the agenda that has been set out for us.

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Appendix A

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Appendix B

Research Projects at NRRC

Instruction

Literature and early reading

The Impact of Independent Reading and Writing on Reading Achievement, Attitude and Use of Literature in Urban Youth
Lesley Mandel Morrow, *Rutgers University*

Improving Reading Instruction for At-Risk 1st- and 2nd-Grade Students: Extending Reading Recovery Principles Into the Regular Classroom
John O'Flahavan, Shelley Wong, *University of Maryland College Park*

An Examination of the Activities in a Whole Language Beginning Reading Program
Lee Galda, Steven A. Stahl, Anthony D. Pellegrini, *University of Georgia*

First-Grade Reading Instruction: Teachers and Students in Transition
James V. Hoffman, *University of Texas at Austin*

Comprehension and cognitive strategies

The Effects of Long-Term Comprehension Instruction
Michael Pressley, *University of Maryland College Park*
Ted Schuder, *Montgomery County Schools, Maryland*
Joan Coley, *Western Maryland College, Westminster, Maryland*
Tommie DePinto, *Carroll County Schools, Maryland*
Mary Ellen Lewis, *Kennedy Institute School, Baltimore, Maryland*

Teacher-Led Comprehension Instruction: Unanswered Questions and Next Steps
James F. Baumann, *University of Georgia*

Entering the Secondary World of Text: Sensory Impressions, Comprehension, and Motivation to Read
Linda B. Gambrell, *University of Maryland College Park*
Debra Miller, *Howard County Schools, Maryland*

Fluency Based Classroom Organizational Models
Steven A. Stahl, *University of Georgia*

Reading Instruction That Promotes Critical Thinking
Michelle Commeyras, *University of Georgia*

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Knowledge-rich contexts

Concept-Centered Reading Instruction in Science, History, and Geography
John Guthrie, Rachel Grant, *University of Maryland College Park*
Lois Bennett, Mary Ellen Rice, *Calverton Elementary School, Beltsville, Maryland*

Misconceptions in Science: Classroom Influences on Learning Counter-Intuitive Information From Science Texts
Cynthia Hynd, Donna E. Alvermann, *University of Georgia*

Understanding Science: Strategic Use of Analogies and Models
Shawn M. Glynn, *University of Georgia*

Social Contexts of Instruction

Readers' Social, Cognitive, and Motivational Development in Varied Group Discussion Structures
Donna E. Alvermann, *University of Georgia*
John O'Flahavan, *University of Maryland College Park*

Increasing the Reading Proficiency of Low-Literate Adults and At-Risk Children
Connie Juel, *University of Virginia*

Using Technology to Enhance Social Interaction for Reading and Writing
David Reinking, Tom Reeves, *University of Georgia*
Valerie Garfield, *Cumming Elementary School, Cumming, Georgia*

Learning

Emergent Literacy and Language Development

Children's Emergent Literacy Experiences in the Sociocultural Contexts of Home and School
Linda Baker, Susan Sonnenschein, Robert Serpell, *University of Maryland Baltimore County*

Family Processes and the Development of Sibling Literacy in Rural Black Families
Gene H. Brody, Zolinda Stoneman, *University of Georgia*

Extending the Literate Community: Home to School, School to Home
Betty Shockley, *Fowler Drive Elementary School, Athens, Georgia*
JoBeth Allen, *University of Georgia*
Barbara Michalove, *Fowler Drive Elementary School, Athens, Georgia*

Reading and Writing in a Bilingual Classroom: Implications for Literacy Development
Olivia Saracho, *University of Maryland College Park*

Semantic Processing During Children's Reading
Paula Schwanenflugel, *University of Georgia*

Development of Knowledge of the Internal State Lexicon
William S. Hall, Dana J. Plude, James Booth, *University of Maryland College Park*

Motivation for reading

Motivational Patterns in Children's Literacy Development
Linda B. Gambrell, *University of Maryland College Park*

Students' Perceptions of Their Own Reasons and Purposes for Being or Not Being Involved in Literacy Activities: A Longitudinal Qualitative Study of Student Motivation Toward Literacy
Penny Oldfather, *University of Georgia*

Metacognition and Interest as Predictors of Learning Through Reading
Martha Carr, *University of Georgia*

The Role of Libraries in Reading Instruction and the Development of Lifelong Readers
Linda DeGroff, *University of Georgia*

Learning Subject Matter from Text

Using Revision Techniques to Improve Content Area Textbooks
Bruce K. Britton, *University of Georgia*

Locating Specific Information in Textbooks: Understanding and Instructing Search Processes in Reading
M. Jean Dreher, *University of Maryland College Park*

The Role of Comprehension Strategies in Mathematical Problem Solving
Denise Muth, *University of Georgia*

How People Learn From Multiple Texts: A Processing Perspective
Cynthia Hynd, Steven A. Stahl, *University of Georgia*

Building a Model of Reading Electronic Texts
David Reinking, *University of Georgia*

An Investigation of the Effects of Instructional Interaction With Reading Materials Categorized by a Typology of Ethnic Identity
Louise M. Tomlinson, *University of Georgia*

Assessment

Improving Instruction and Learning for At-Risk Children Through Performance-Based Reading Assessment
William Schafer, John T. Guthrie, Peter Afflerbach, *University of Maryland College Park*
Jay McTighe, Bob Gabrys, Barbara Kapinus, Hannah Kruglanski, *Maryland Department of Education, Baltimore, Maryland*
Denise Borders, Susan Spath, *Baltimore City Schools, Baltimore, Maryland*
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Literacy Portfolio Assessment
Sheila Valencia, *University of Washington*

Developing Standards for New Assessments in Reading
Barbara Kapinus, Hannah Kruglanski, *Maryland Department of Education, Baltimore, Maryland*
Michelle Commeyras, *University of Georgia*

The Communication and Interpretation of Reading Assessment Information
Peter Afflerbach, *University of Maryland College Park*

Professional Development

Teacher Development Within a Teacher Research Community Devoted to Reading Instruction for Elementary At-Risk Students
John O'Flahavan, *University of Maryland College Park*
Jane Litchko, *Jackson Road Elementary School, Silver Springs, Maryland*

Teacher Development in School-Based Research Communities: Exploring Whole Language Instruction for All Students
JoBeth Allen, Steve White, Tom Valentine, Joel Taxel, Donna Alvermann, *University of Georgia*

Case Studies and School-Based Research in a Foxfire Model Teacher Training Program in Secondary School Literacy
Sally Hudson-Ross, Dana L. Fox, *University of Georgia*
Connie Zimmerman, *Atlanta Skyline Network, Atlanta, Georgia*
Patti Heitmuller, Kate Kirby, *Gwinnett County Public Schools, Georgia*

Teachers' Implementation of Authentic Reading Through Interdisciplinary Instruction in the Elementary School
Sherrie Gibney-Sherman, *Athens-Clarke County School District, Athens, Georgia*

Factors Influencing the Reading Status of Inner-City African American Children
Ruby L. Thompson, Gloria Mixon, Lou Beasley, *Clark Atlanta University*

Teachers' Growth in Understanding Literacy Development, Multiculturalism, and Literacy Instruction for Multicultural Populations
James Flood, Dianne Lapp, *San Diego State University, California*

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